

WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN

TheVillageNews

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2023



Photograph by Roger Evans

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Blenheim

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Handwritten note:
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I will be in London
all the time for the
people come to see
the house - they are
so all interested in
the old car - yesterday
I came to my car -
I told her a story in
the car - I was
falling



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Village Directory

THE VILLAGE NEWS

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Jordie 350992

Village Hall Bookings

Jordie and Andrew Wilson

01869 350992

SOCIETIES

WESTON SOCIETY

WESTON WALKERS

FOOTPATH WARDEN

Graham Barnett: 01869 350707

GARDEN CLUB

Emma Bernard: 01869 350312

GOLDEN LEAVES

Alison Townsend: 01869 350569

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE (WI)

Lyn Barnett: 01869 350707

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Bob Hessian: 01869 350662

NEIGHBOURS NATTER

COFFEE MORNING

Patsy Parsons: 01869 350331

THAMES VALLEY POLICE

Non-Emergency Line: 101

OCC

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CHERWELL DISTRICT

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WESTON ON THE GREEN PARISH

COUNCIL

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Ben Lanham, Playing Field:

07887 886138

Tracy Rowan: 07833 473357

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From the editor

Writing this in the midst of a mini Indian Summer heatwave, it's hard to believe we're into the seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness - the wet summer seems a distant memory and the thought of ordering a load of logs a mad idea (though by the time you read this I'm assuming the first fires of the season will have been lit).

However, Autumn it is – the harvest is almost all in, schools are back, squirrels are beginning to gather nuts and the blackberries are ripening on the brambles (though how sad it is that we now can't access the ones at the top of the School Field due to the new fencing) – and this edition is packed with information about not just Autumnal events but looking further ahead to the Christmas season. Even with the thermometer registering 30° as I type, there is a sense of a change of seasons hanging in the air ...

As ever, please support our village activities – these are what make the village special and people put so much effort into ensuring there's a wide range of events throughout the year to enjoy.

Also



Photo: Jordie Riches



Photo: Mick East



Photo: Yasemin Olcay

Deadline for December/January edition:
2nd NOVEMBER 2023

Caring for our elderly

Easily the oldest building in our village is the church. It's stood here for many centuries. It's been the scene of tears of joy at countless weddings and tears of sadness at innumerable funerals. It has echoed to the sound of babies and children, of choirs and organs. It has been a place of refuge where anyone can go at any time to share their thoughts and prayers, hopes and fears with their God. It still is all those things and we'd like it to be around for a good while yet. But it is under threat.

The threat doesn't come from blind bureaucracy at 'the centre'. No one in the general Anglican hierarchy or more locally has plans to re-organise our church out of existence or to close it. On the contrary, everyone responsible for it at every level wants it to flourish. But the simple fact is that it costs more to keep it open than the weekly congregation can afford.

Parish share (what we pay to the diocese as our proportion of paying and housing our clergy), heating, lighting, insurance, maintenance and myriad smaller

BENEFICE NEWS

Hallowe'en Festival of Lights

A special Hallowe'en-tide afternoon of activities, especially for younger ones – at Chesterton Community Hall on Sunday 29 October from 1500-1630.

All Saints' Tide

We will be holding our All Saints' Tide service at Weston on the Green on Sunday 29 October at 1030, welcoming the Hexachord Choir, who will be singing Byrd's 4-part Mass.

All Souls' Sunday

We will observe All Souls' Day this year on Sunday 5 November. This is our chance to remember our deceased relatives and friends, especially (but not only) those who have died in the past year. There is also a chance to light a candle in memory of loved ones. Service times are listed at <https://www.akemanbenefice.org.uk/church-services>

Choral concert by Cantores

A choral concert by the group Cantores is on the evening of Saturday 2 December at Kirtlington Church – time and price to be decided.

Children's Choir Event - Sunday 3 December

During the autumn we will be coming into the schools to invite children to take part in a children's choir event on 3 December at 1600 in Kirtlington Church. More information to follow.

Harvest

A big thank you to all who decorated our churches for harvest, and who helped prepare harvest lunches, suppers, breakfasts and other events.

bills all add up to more than the faithful few in the pews can contribute. External fundraising events: fetes, race nights, 200 clubs, quizzes, all help. But there is still a gap.

Before you reach for your pen or keyboard to demand to know why the wealthy Church of England or the government doesn't pay for the upkeep of our church, here are a couple of facts. The Church of England is wealthy but the money its capital earns each year goes to pay for the training of the clergy of tomorrow, for the pensions of many of the clergy of yesterday, for the upkeep of cathedrals and bishops' staffs and for mission projects around the country. Not, you will note, for the upkeep of individual churches. Government support is largely confined to waiving VAT on some maintenance bills. So responsibility for the 16,000 or so local churches rests, as it almost always has, with local communities.

When there is a need for a capital sum to repair the roof or porch or to install a toilet or automate the clock or replace the pews with chairs, the local community responds with overwhelming generosity. And there are capital grants to help with these things too. But, meanwhile, the drip-drip of ongoing regular financial commitments is wearing away the stone represented by the faithful people who make up the body of the Church.

Could you help? You may only go to church very occasionally or perhaps not at all. But you may value the church for its heritage and for what it still represents. You may have relations lying in the churchyard; perhaps a son or daughter was baptised or married in the church; maybe you have popped in on occasion to reflect or to have a word with God. In the near future a leaflet outlining ways in which you can contribute financially to your church should be in your hands. Please read it, consider its message and act on it if you can.

We do the best we can for our elderly folk even though we know they probably won't be with us for much longer. With the best we can do for our church it will be around for many years to come, still offering everything it did in the past to us and to future generations.

Thank you.

Paul Clifford, Licensed Lay Minister ■■■

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drop-in café for young and old. Play and crafts for little ones, tea and cake for everyone!
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 KIRTLINGTON CHURCH

We will remember

Our church has a full and active calendar of events in the coming months. The service details including the dates and times are listed in the report from our Rector, and/or posted on our bulletin boards.

On October 29th at 10:30 am we will hold our All Saints Service which is devoted to remembering those loved ones who have died. While it is a sad occasion because we miss them dearly, it is also a time to reflect and be grateful that those who have departed were an important participant an aspect in our lives. Our church offers that quiet space in our community, away from the noise of life in general, to appreciate how privileged we have been to know them. It is a time when we can share our grief.

During October we hope to hold an event to recognize and thank all those people in our village who offer their volunteer services to our community. This is not solely for those who help in the day-to-day functioning of our church. The event will include those members who help beyond the remit of the church. As you are aware, many charities are experiencing difficulty attracting volunteers in the post-COVID, because people's time allocation has shifted during the lock down, and quite possibly something called "volunteer fatigue". Our Weston community is fortunate that we continue to have many active volunteers and our church wishes to express our community's appreciation to those people. Full details will be published on various media closer to the event.

On November 12th at 10:45 am we will hold our Remembrance Day service devoted to remembering with gratitude those who laid down their lives in two World Wars and other conflicts trying to protect our nation for the benefit of future generations. The service will commence in the churchyard at one of the war graves and then process into our church. Our church will be specially decorated for the event. As in the past, the retiring collection will be dedicated



Photograph by Jordie Riches

to the Royal British Legion. We hope you will join this important event in the life of our nation.

While it is early, please reserve Saturday, December 9th at 9:30 am for our annual Big Breakfast event at the Village Hall. The cost for a sumptuous breakfast is £7.50 per person. Many people consider the occasion as a great start to their Christmas seasonal festivities.

Another date for your diary is Sunday, December 17th at 6:30 pm for our Lessons and Carols Service followed by mulled wine and mince tarts.

October and November services at St Mary's Church, Weston on the Green

1st October	18:00	Evensong (BCP service)
8th October	11:00	Morning Worship
15th October	11:00	Holy Communion
29th October All Saints	10:30	Holy Communion (with Hexachord)
5th November All Souls	18:00	All Souls' Service
12th November	10:45	Remembrance Service
19th November	11:00	Holy Communion

For other services in the Akeman Benefice please visit: <https://www.akemanbenefice.org.uk/church-services>

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Chair's comments

IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING to begin anew in September. Children are beginning a new school year and parents are hoping to get back to some semblance of a schedule. For those of us with older children or grandchildren, there may be opportunities to have a little holiday or just enjoy an Indian summer in our gardens.

For the Parish Council it is a time of tidying up, mowing, strimming and trimming the hedges that have grown wildly over the summer. We continue to need volunteers to help with mowing the playing field and strimming in and around the playing field. We want to avoid increasing the precept which puts an additional tax burden on you and so need villagers to contribute to the maintenance of the village. If these outdoor activities interest you, please call as soon as possible to offer your services (see number for Ben below).

Playground development

Councillor Ben Lanham is our lead for all matters relating to the playing field and spinney and is in the initial stages of gathering ideas around the development of the playground. This project needs to reflect the needs of the village. To know and understand



the wide variety of these ideas, it would work much better to have an advisory group of villagers. You may have small children that love playing outdoors on and around equipment. You may have young teenagers that wish for specific equipment, or you might want more quiet areas for reading or chatting. Ben is meeting with consultants and specialists in playgrounds now and I am sure he would like to share ideas with a team. Please contact him on 07887 836138.

There are two issues that bring the Parish Council to despair and those are the removal of the path around the oak tree and the reduction of the speed limit on the B430. We continue to push on both issues and give credit to our district and county councillors for their support and direct action with lead officers at the district and county offices. By the time you read this article we will have had a meeting about the speed limit – there is agreement to change it, but decisions need to be



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made about what traffic slowing solutions need to be put in place ... and managing the cost. Meanwhile we are pursuing a funding possibility for this project. Action on the oak tree path is promised, the time limit is unknown.

The Food Bank collections

continue to reflect the kindness of people in this village. Your budgets are tightening but you have found a way to help others who are

struggling. The last two collections have seen us donate 204.75 kgs of food. That is tremendous!! So many children have benefitted from your generosity over the summer months. Then, of course, we come to harvest!

Donations

Please be aware that **October 2nd** is our next donation morning at the Village Pantry!!

Local Plan Consultations

Very importantly the Consultation **Draft Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040** was considered by the Council's Executive on Monday, 4 September 2023.

You can access the draft plan and supporting documents via the Council's website:

<https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=3811&Ver=4>

The Executive agreed the recommendations and a draft plan will be published for a 6-week

consultation in mid-September (dates to be confirmed).

You will receive a formal notification when the consultation starts, and this will include further information on the consultation and engagement arrangements.

There are sections of this plan that are key to this village. Councillors will study it and consider a reply to the consultation. Meanwhile, everyone is welcome to read and respond.

Meanwhile, we continue to welcome newcomers to the village. Please sign up for the Parish Council updates by contacting the Clerk, contact details at the front of the magazine. Also, you can read about our work and projects on the website: www.westononthegreen-pc.gov.uk

Diane Bohm,
Chair

High fibre option

Gigaclear continues to work through the village installing the infrastructure for "Fibre to the premises" that should provide faster and more stable broadband to users.

6-month free trial

If you do wish to take Gigaclear, we recommend the "6-month free trial" which you can request when ringing them to sign-up. The number to call is on their website: <https://gigaclear.com>

This is a completely free-of-charge 6-month trial which you can run alongside your existing copper provider. You will need to provide bank details, but you will only be charged if you do not cancel before the end of the trial.

This allows you to check out Gigaclear (speed, reliability, customer service etc.) before making an informed decision.

Community Hub

The Parish Council has requested to place the free Gigaclear "community hub" into the church. This will allow more modern usage of the church including the live streaming of services and weddings.

Reminders:

We understand that the Government intends to remove copper landlines by 2025, but it is not clear whether this will be achieved.

This is not an endorsement of Gigaclear - the decision is entirely yours.

You need good coverage throughout the house to take advantage of these high speeds. This means good WIFI and/or ethernet cable. Gigaclear provide Linksys WIFI router(s) with their packages.

Within reason, you can choose where the fibre enters your premises for free. You need to have two power sockets within 3' (1m) of the entry point to power the wall-mounted modem and the Linksys router. Our Gigaclear "customer liaison executive" has told us that people on the official vulnerable list can also request a battery backup for free that will keep their connection working during power-outages.

James Henderson,
Technology Advisor to the Parish Council

Planning Update

Planning applications relating to the parish are discussed at each Parish Council meeting and a report is placed on the Parish Council website. Full information regarding each application is available via the Planning and Building section on the Cherwell District Council website.

BUILDING APPLICATIONS:

Decisions Received – Permitted

22/03709/F - Starbucks A34

Addition of a drive-through facility and parking changes

The proposal is for the addition of a small serving window with flat roof overhead on the north-west face of the existing building and rerouting traffic in and out of the site.

23/01351/LB – Westfield Farm Cottage, North Lane

Replacing floor substructure in kitchen and bathroom.

23/00725/F – Kemsley Barn

Construction of double garage with home office in roof space above.

23/01455/DISC – Kemsley Farm

Discharge of condition – drainage scheme.

Awaiting Decision

23/00994/F – Family Farm, A34 South

Installation of a new Outdoor Swimming Pool (10m x 3m), Associated hard soft landscaping and conversion of existing outbuilding into a swimming pool plant building.



23/01788/F – New Sarum, Northampton Road

Formation of a two-storey side extension to accommodate an annexe, and a single storey extension across the rear of the property and the creation of a dropped kerb to the existing vehicular access.

23/01936/LB – Manor Hotel, Northampton Road

Install obscured glass double glazing to the cellar in the stable block (currently boarded up). Purpose is to stabilise humidity and temperature for storage of materials. Propose metal double-glazed windows (partly submerged from external ground level.

23/02337/F - OS Parcel 9366

Adjoining and West of Vermont Northampton Road
Change of use of land from agricultural to equestrian
MOD comment: potential impact of aircraft noise (regular take-off and landing route) on safe equine use.

Tress Works

23/02260/TCA – Mill House, Mill Lane

Additional items

Planning application 21/02930/M106 -Southfield Development
Application to modify the S106 Deed of Agreement relevant to 13/01796/OUT

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News from Oxfordshire County Council

Oxfordshire Resident Support Scheme

The County Council has launched a new scheme to support residents who are either in, or at risk of being in crisis, are in need of immediate help and have no other source of financial support available to them. The Resident Support Scheme will help with short-term basic living costs such as food and credit for gas/electric prepayment meters. It can also help in some circumstances with white goods, furniture and clothing. It is intended to meet one-off crisis or emergency need and is not designed to meet any type of ongoing expenses.

The scheme will also signpost residents to other sources of support that are available to ensure that they can get the maximum level of help. There may also be the opportunity for referral for advice/assistance with financial, debt and/or welfare benefits to try and address the resident's long-term needs.

All residents aged 16 years or over are eligible to apply but the council has identified the following groups as a priority to support:

- those experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse
- families with young children
- older people
- people with longer-term illnesses
- people with disabilities
- people with mental health needs
- households with a pregnant person

Further information and a link to apply to the scheme can be found here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/help-rising-living-costs/residents-support-scheme>

If you are unable to get online, you can use the free Wi-Fi or the free-to-access PCs in one of Oxfordshire's 44 libraries, where staff will be happy to help. Or, you can apply by telephone on 01865 804171, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm excluding bank holidays.

If you are finding it difficult to apply online, or if you have a query about a new or existing application, please email RSSOxfordshire@necsws.com or call 01865 804171.

Free electric blanket tests this autumn

Oxfordshire residents are being encouraged to take up the offer of a free electric blanket check, part of Oxfordshire County Council's programme to ensure everyone is safe, as well as warm, this winter.

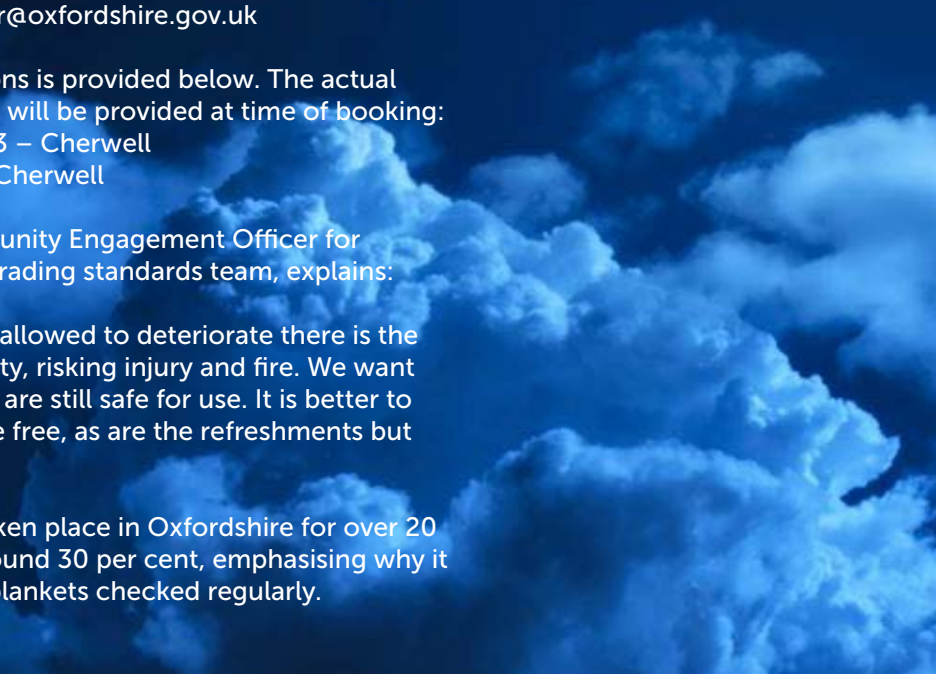
The electric blanket tests are normally very popular, with places limited. Therefore, they must be pre-booked by phoning 01865 895999 or emailing duty.officer@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The full list of dates and locations is provided below. The actual address and a specific time slot will be provided at time of booking:
 Wednesday 20 September 2023 – Cherwell
 Wednesday 4 October 2023 – Cherwell

Shelley Edwards, Senior Community Engagement Officer for Oxfordshire County Council's trading standards team, explains:

"If the condition of a blanket is allowed to deteriorate there is the possibility it could become faulty, risking injury and fire. We want to ensure that electric blankets are still safe for use. It is better to be safe than sorry. The tests are free, as are the refreshments but remember to pre-book!"

Testing electric blankets has taken place in Oxfordshire for over 20 years. The failure rate is still around 30 per cent, emphasising why it is so important to get electric blankets checked regularly.



OUR LAST UPDATE, following the Village meeting in July, was a plea for more committee members. We are delighted to report an expanded committee with some valuable additional expertise on the business and financial side. We are delighted to have Linda, who brings a wealth of experience with the Post Office as a possible Postmistress. We now have four, and hopefully five new members in addition to the four from the initial committee, so we are again a viable group. It is great to have the support of Amanda, who in addition to her business expertise, is able to represent the view from Middleton Stoney.

Beyond Weston

Forty-five percent of the survey returns were from surrounding villages, indicating the importance of the shop and post office beyond Weston. Incidentally, if you were not able to make the last village meeting you can find the slides, with the summary survey results, on our website: <https://weston-sos.org/public-consultation-meeting-a-call-to-action> or open the link to the item in the news section.

As we outlined at the July Village meeting, our initial work was to identify the most viable option which was to establish a 'Community Benefit Society', which has been registered with the Financial Conduct Authority. We are continuing to work on the business plan to ensure that our plans for the shop and post office are financially viable. The plans include renovations to rent out the flat above the shop to increase the income. Sam, our Chair, is leading on the business plan with incredible energy and commitment, and we are working with valuable support from Nathan Brown, a professional adviser paid



An Update from Weston SOS on the future of the Weston Pantry

for by a Government Community Ownership Fund startup grant which Sam secured.

The business plan is needed both to apply for a full grant from the Government Community Ownership Fund, of £250,000 and to gain the 'Community Shares Standard Mark' so that all of you who buy shares in the community shop and post-office can do so with confidence. We are grateful to those of you who have already completed the pledge forms (blanks are available from the village shop, but strictly confidential once completed).

Chicken and egg

We are in a 'chicken and egg' situation, in trying to assess how much money might be forthcoming for community shares. This clearly impacts on the business plan and how much we might need to borrow; we need a minimum of £100,000 from the community shares from Weston and beyond. A pledge is a little more commitment than any figure you might have indicated in the survey, as we are asking for your name and Sam will contact you when the shares are ready. However, a pledge is not yet an obligation to buy as you would

clearly want to see the business plan and the formal share offer before you actually hand over any money.

The survey did not capture everyone in the Village, but 60% of those responding to the question did express an interest in buying shares which we found encouraging. When we presented to the Village in July, we had hoped we might be eligible for Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) which gives generous tax relief; unfortunately, as we are taking over a business, we seem not to be eligible.

For future presentation

Please watch out for the next Village meeting, date to be announced, during which we will present the business plan and share offer. We are still interested in additional support, particularly with administration (minute-taking), media/public relations. Any comments, observations or suggestions for fund-raising gratefully received, please email or complete the form on our webpage <https://weston-sos.org>. If you win the lottery, please think of us – we'd be happy to hear from anyone who might buy the shop and lease it back to us!

Fiona Spensley
Weston SOS Committee
committee@weston-sos.org

For more detailed background information about how the Post Office Ltd (POL) works and the challenges Sub-postmasters wishing to sell face please turn to the centre pages.



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Chequers Weston On The Green

The summer months are traditionally slightly quieter in terms of bookings for the Village Hall and the Committee took the opportunity to carry out some stock-taking and planning sessions. We have now added a stainless steel catering trolley for use in the kitchen and in the Memorial Garden we have planted some additional perennials and installed a hedgehog house to encourage the biodiversity in this area.

As the nights start to draw in the Committee are busy planning a couple of events which we hope will appeal to villagers. Our main event in October is the annual fireworks display. We are really lucky to have a fantastic display courtesy of Mark East (ably supported by Mick!) and we always have a 'pinch me' moment as the first rockets launch. This year's event will be taking place at the playing field on Saturday 28th October, with the gates opening at 6.15pm and the display starting at 7pm. Once again we will be selling mulled wine and hot snacks. The entry to this event is a minimum donation of £1 with any profit going towards next year's display. We know we are biased but we think the display put on by Mark and Mick is one of the best in Oxfordshire!

We almost daren't mention it but due to the way the Village News runs we also need to mention Christmas! Our Christmas Tree Lights Switch On, raffle and visit by Father Christmas is planned for the first Sunday of Advent, 3rd December, at 6pm. On offer will be mulled wine, nibbles and lots of Christmas cheer! To receive a gift from Father Christmas children have to be aged 11 or under and live in the village. To register your child for a gift please email westonvillagehall@live.co.uk with the name, age and address of your child and we will make sure Father Christmas gets the details!

The Village Hall Committee would also like to run the Advent Windows again this December so if you would like to create an Advent window please email us with your



preferred date and location. For new villagers this event takes place from 1st to 24th December with a house (or business) in the village revealing an Advent window each day and leaving it on display until just after Christmas. A map is also produced to show where the Advent windows are in the village. Our Village Hall Facebook page has photos from previous years for those seeking inspiration and we are happy to see the return of previous years amazing Advent windows!

Although the summer has been a bit hit-and-miss regarding the weather it has been lovely to see a number of 'Coronation' sunflowers

around the village. As part of the Coronation Afternoon Tea in May we had given out packets of commemorative sunflower seeds and it really has brought some cheer to the grey days to see them now in bloom around the village. As part of commemorating the Coronation the Hall Committee have commissioned a new noticeboard which will house a bespoke OS map of the village and a QR code to access a range of walks in Weston and the surrounding areas. Our thanks go to Graham Barnett for the map. We hope this will prove popular with villagers and visiting walkers alike.





PHONE BOX LIBRARY

Opening Times for 2023

The phone box is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, from early morning until dusk when it is then locked up for the night.

Please feel free to borrow a book to read. We only ask that you return it in a good condition for the next person to borrow.

Stock will be rotated on a regular basis.

Please could we ask that book donations are not left in the phone box. If you wish to donate books please email

westonvillagehall@live.co.uk

Many thanks and happy reading!



GARDENERS WANTED!

Can you help? Do you like gardening and have a couple of hours to spare on a regular basis? Due to the retirement of Ed and Sally, the Village Hall Committee is looking for someone who could maintain the flower garden at the Village Hall. We do the buying and planting of the bulbs and shrubs so are looking for someone who could keep the flower beds free from weeds, etc. If you are interested please get in touch via our email: westonvillagehall@live.co.uk

250 CLUB RESULTS

August 2023

1st prize

£18 51 Paula & Bob Hessian

2nd Prize

£12 172 Yasemin Oclay

3rd Prize

£6 250 Jessica Warren

September 2023

1st prize

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A Special Thank You

As readers of the Village News know, we have spent the last few years developing the garden at the Village Hall and have planted rose bushes, flowering perennials and evergreen shrubs to ensure colour all year round. Villagers have donated spring bulbs to ensure there is an abundance of tulips and daffodils to greet us after the winter months, and the roses have given us a wonderful display this summer.

Our role has been to plant them and hope they grow but the maintenance of the garden - the weeding, sweeping the path, tidying up the garden, creating the floral display in the planter by the entrance to the Hall, the pruning and general upkeep has been down to the weekly efforts of Ed and Sally Bentley. Their hard work on Monday afternoons has been very much appreciated by the Village Hall Committee and we give our sincere thanks for everything Ed and Sally have done for the Hall.

Their sterling work has allowed us to enjoy the garden in all its glory. Unfortunately, Ed and Sally can no longer carry on with the main garden (but will still maintain the planter by the Hall entrance) so this edition of the Village News marks their 'official' retirement from their gardening duties. Thank you so much Ed and Sally for all you have done.

The Village Hall Committee



Supporting
Weston-on-the-Green Village Hall

Play Cherwell Lottery and support our cause!

- Make a difference to the community and support the Village Hall
- Sign-up for only £1 a week!
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Over the last two years on average 5 post offices a week
The Government has told the Post Office to be

SO WHY ARE POST OFFICES

POST OFFICE LTD (POL) is the largest retailer in the UK and operates through a very complicated system. Apart from their directly run main branches, there is a web across the land keeping Post Offices alive through Sub-Postmasters (SP) who are contracted to them in several different ways:

- **Community Contract** which is what we have at Weston. POL pay the SP a monthly fee to keep the office open plus commission. Its future is dependent on the SP, and POL cannot close it down, though news of very small branches having received a 26-months' notice to hand back their contract is filtering through communications we receive from the SP union, the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters (NFSP). These branches also act as your high street bank.
- **Old Contract** which is similar to the Community Contract but with less guarantees.
- **Local Contract** whereby the branch only receives commission on the work they do with restrictive banking services which is very difficult to sustain in small villages unless community owned and ran by volunteers. This model would be difficult maintain in Weston given the demand for high volume banking.

Then there is the whole thing that started with branches moving into the Co-op which can only be described as a combination of the old and local contract. As the Co-op have to pay the staff to operate the PO, the expansion of this programme has been on hold for some time.

The word on the grapevine is POL have marked all of the Old and Community Contracts as either 'Withdraw' or 'Go Local' and intend to build the network back up to 11,500 branches by placing Drop & Collect Stations in local shops and call them a 'Post Office' as they have currently done in the Co-op in Blethington.

These Drop and Collect stations are NOT proper Post Offices, they are purely a scanning service to drop off pre-paid mail or collect and nothing more.

One local SP with an Old contract has been trying to sell her leasehold on the open market for 18 months and has had 3 prospective buyers rejected by POL



stating, 'it is against POL's policy to give reasons why a particular applicant has been unsuccessful'. I am reliably informed that any form of borrowing for the business has an immediate negative impact on the application though I wonder if this is some ploy to close the office.

Customer feedback has been amazing, far outstripping many other branches in the area.

Josh Richardson, PO Area Manager

Another SP in the region with a Community Contract like ours in a beautiful freehold building with fantastic accommodation has been on the open market for nearly a year and hasn't even had an applicant get to the POL stage. Yet all Local Contracts in towns and large villages have been selling like hot cakes as leaseholds.

Anybody looking for a lifestyle change and taking up running a village PO and shop are looking much

shops are closing, wrenching the heart out of communities.
Bringing the network back up to 11,500 branches.

OFFICES STILL CLOSING?

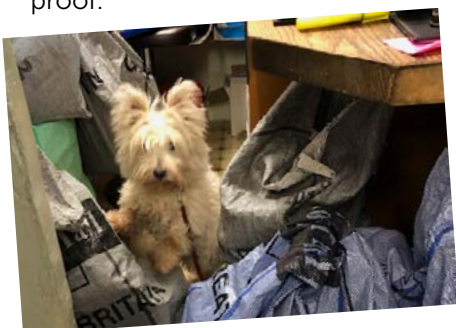


further
away from
the Home
Counties due to
the cost of freehold
properties.

How this affects Weston Post Office and Pantry

Having spoken to other SPs in the area at length and the NFSP who track the data and trends across the country, I have made the decision not to waste £500 in up-front listing fees with the commercial agents to test a market which is speaking for itself.

I have also spoken to one of the heads of departments at POL that handle PO ownership transfers and have been told that the PO in Weston on the Green has been marked as 'Go Local' but they will honour the community contract IF I was able to sell to someone that had been approved by the PO - in other words to someone who was financially bullet proof.



During this conversation, I got the very strong impression POL would rather I

closed thus forcing them to find somewhere within a 3-mile radius to open their preferred option of a Local Office.

The SOS Committee have done an amazing job so far working towards a solution to keep our Shop and PO for the community. When they are ready to apply to POL, I will resign as SP and propose them as my replacement which will then trigger POL advertising the PO for sale on their website, giving the opportunity for anyone looking in this area for such an enterprise. It will be interesting to see under which contract they will market the post.

Thanks for all that you have done and continue to do.

John Howell MP

I understand from SOS the number of members of the community who have kindly pledged isn't as many as it was hoped for and hence they are now looking at mortgage options which I fear may jeopardise their application to POL.

If you feel strongly about keeping the heart of the community ticking, the convenience of having the PO at your doorstep, protecting the value of your houses then **SOS Needs You** ... Please don't be complacent, once it's gone, it's gone and will never come back.

My family and I saved it from closing six years ago. The incredible staff and a number of people in the community made sure it became the gem that it is today - we were finalists in the PO's Community Engagement Award in 2020 due to our work during the Covid crisis. It would be a crying shame to lose it now.

Please support SOS to keep it open.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask me or get in touch with the SOS Committee.

Yasemin



WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN
VILLAGE PANTRY & POST OFFICE



Weston-on-the-Green WI

At our July meeting, Sarah Churchill gave us a very interesting talk on tuberculosis, which is still surprisingly common in this country. Thankfully treatment has improved and now a cocktail of antibiotics is given over several months. Sarah worked at the Churchill hospital and involved ensuring that medication, some not so easy to swallow, was being taken, often having to travel around the area as patients returned home. She had many facts and insights into her work and it was a very informative and thought-provoking evening, as well as entertaining.

We don't have a meeting in August, but we have enjoyed a coffee morning and a lunch at Aston Pottery.

Ruth Warner will be talking to us at our meeting on October 18th about 'The Survival of the Fittest' and on November 15th Liz Woolley will be telling us about the Life and Work of Lord Nuffield.

We would like to invite all ladies to join us and several are already from Bletchington and other villages. If you are new to either village or even a long, time resident it's a great way to make new friends. Give us a try – you will be very welcome.

Our WI meets at Weston village hall every month except August, on the third Wednesday at 7.30pm. In addition, we have theatre and other visits, plus occasional coffee mornings and lunches. We also have a craft afternoon on the 4th Monday at 2pm and walks on the 2nd Monday at 1.30pm, both of which were WI initiatives although you don't need to be a member to take part.

We'd love to see you - please contact our secretary Lyn Barnett on 01869 350707 or email on wotg.wi@gmail.com if you would like to know more.

Lyn Barnett



Weston Walkers

Our walk in July saw 6 of us heading off across to the Stonepits, on to Kirtlington Park and back to Weston via the Oxfordshire Way.

Unfortunately, due again to the weather forecast we cancelled our August walk, though as it happened we would probably have stayed dry!

We will hopefully have walked in September and our next dates will be Monday 9 October and Monday 13 November, which will be the last one of the year.

All are welcome to join in as and when, there is no commitment to every month, so if you wish to enjoy sociable company, conversation and exercise please

come along and join in or speak to me.

There are now also several local walks to enjoy published on the Weston on the Green Parish Council website, under Health and Wellbeing.

If while out walking you encounter any problems with overgrown vegetation, damaged stiles or footbridges, or any other issues, please let me know for Weston Parish or Katie Holt (01869 350219) for Bletchington Parish, in order that they can be reported to the County Council for repair.

Graham Barnet
01869 350707



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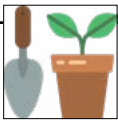
Weston Society

Weston Society met on Monday 10th July when Liz Woolley, a favourite of the Society, gave a talk on "Axtell to Zacharias. The men who built Oxford".

She didn't actually go right through the alphabet but gave us some interesting facts and figures on the most prominent of the architects and builders responsible for the growth of Oxford. We will also have held our AGM on Monday 11th September when Mark Davis will have spoken on "Alice's Adventures in Oxford".

Our next meeting is on Monday 13 November when we are expecting a talk on Stonesfield Embroidery.

All are welcome free of charge to their first meeting, there is an annual subscription of £10 per person for anyone who then wishes to join, which enables us to pay for speakers and to share wine and nibbles after the meeting.



Weston-on-the-Green Garden Club

In 1963 the Club was formed. In those days it was known as the Weston on the Green Horticultural Society and ran a Flower and Produce show in conjunction with six other local societies. Back then, competitors entered all seven local shows if they wanted to win the coveted "Moore Blackthorn Trophy" for the most points gained in the seven shows or the "Harris Trophy" which was, from my memory, restricted to most points for vegetable classes. The seven shows were run under the rules of the RHS, The Royal Horticultural Society, which is still going strong. However, of the seven shows, Weston on the Green was the last remaining one maintaining the tradition until Covid struck. We had to forego the show that year. Sadly, we have also had to cancel this year's autumn show.

The Garden Club has had a successful year this year with the Spring Show and the "Open Gardens Evenings" programme. These are strongly sociable evenings looking around a garden for inspiration and conversation

about the garden as well as "ships, and string and sealing-wax, and cabbages and Kings" whilst drinking a glass of wine and enjoying Ann Holt's delicious nibbles.

We are losing several members of the organising committee of the Garden Club this year and without new blood the Club does look in jeopardy. If you have an inclination towards ordinary gardening (you do not need to be Monty Don) and are keen to keep a successful Club programme going, please volunteer for the committee. Without a few more members on the committee the Club does look as though it may cease to exist.

If you are willing to stand for the Garden Club Committee, please contact Emma Bernard on 01869 350312 by 28th October 2023.

The AGM will be held in November; see posters for details nearer the time.

Robin Stafford-Allen



Photo: Jennie Henderson



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DARTS HAVE BEEN PLAYED in Weston for many years. Dad used to play at the Chequers when it was run by the Bowles family. At that time the pub looked a lot different with the new bar and extension not even thought about. This memory is from the early 70s until the pubs became restaurants.

I started playing in the Ben on a Sunday lunchtime in the late 60s. We then joined the Cherwell League to play during the week.

To achieve compliance with regulations we had to increase the height of the throw. I believe this was when John Heard was landlord. This was achieved by breaking out an oblong in the floor some 6" deep. A breaker was borrowed from work and several of us youngsters broke out the floor on a Saturday morning. The bottom was concreted to give a flat standing area. This not only gave us the required ceiling room but ensured that no-one could step over the Oche. It took a while, but you soon learned to step up before walking forward to retrieve your darts. When not in use a timber and ply box was dropped

in the hole. This was filled in much later under a new landlord. New tiling can still be seen in the floor of what used to be the tap room, just by the window seat.

This room on a Sunday lunchtime was filled with dart players, cribbage players on one table and domino players on a table where the hole in the wall now leads to the kitchen and dining room. They played either penny spot or penny knock. There was even a space invaders machine behind the dart throw. The new landlord, Jonno, remembers playing darts from the hole in the floor.

When Patrick became landlord of the Chequers we played down there. The dartboard was sited on the back wall between the kitchen and living room doors. Here we played in the Cherwell League, proper darts known as DODO where it was double on, double out. There was the opportunity to brush your opponent, i.e get out on a double before they had got a double to start. EODO Easy on was only for the Ladies darts and latterly for televised comps. Still not proper darts. Each player

played three legs with a point per leg for the team. A team consisted of six players, so it was possible to win eighteen nil, or lose eighteen nil. The winter 83/84 cards came to light whilst I was sorting out old photos in a damp windy July. The Cherwell League covered Bicester and the surrounding villages.

The players are listed as: Patrick Bennett (Chequers Landlord); Dave Pearson; Nigel Cound; Mick Parker; Mick Mitchell; Ian Kerry; Mick East; John Spittle; Bert East; and Len Fellows:

The two pubs used to have an annual contest, playing darts and dominoes culminating in the landlords drinking a yard of ale. This however stopped when Patrick moved away from the village.

On a separate topic, the Village Hall has just had its 50th anniversary. When they were collecting for the hall to be built, Jack Smith asked me for a contribution. He didn't see the funny side when he was offered an LBC Dapple Light (a house brick.)

Mick East

Bob's Barn Owl Update

So, 4 eggs laid, 3 hatched but only two fledged and left the nest-box. No explanation as to what happened to it. A couple of weeks later one of them paid a visit by coming down a redundant flue pipe into the utility room.

The ring on its left leg identified it as one of this year's young. I let it go by returning it to the nest box where it could make its own mind up as to when to venture outside again!

Bob Hessian



Sylvia Elizabeth West - Newbridge House

Please may we offer my heartfelt thanks to so many people in Weston on the Green who demonstrated so much kindness to my mother, Sylvia, including attending her funeral.

My husband and I have received much comfort from such generosity of thought and actions.

Thank you so much.

Rebecca and Rhun

Everyone is Welcome to....

Neighbours' Natter

Bring your Magazines to Swap

Weston-on-the-Green Village Hall

Thursdays Oct. 12th and Nov. 9th 10am - Noon

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Weston on the Green Memorial Village Hall



Bonfire & Fireworks



Saturday 28th October 2023

Weston on the Green Playing Field

6.15pm Bonfire

7pm Firework Display

Hot snacks

Dinky Donuts Van

Ice Cream Van

Mulled Wine and other refreshments

Bonfire construction from 10am-12pm on the day

Offers of help and donations of wood please

contact Paul Warren 350770

Minimum Entry Donation = £1 pp

All proceeds towards the 2024 display

Weston on the Green Memorial Village Hall

Living Advent Calendar Windows Event

1st-24th December 2023



After the success of last year's Advent Village Windows we would like to run the event in 2023. If you would like to create an Advent window please could you email westonvillagehall@live.co.uk or contact us via Facebook (Weston on the Green Memorial Village Hall) with your preferred date and location. Windows/dates can be repeated from previous years and we welcome windows from children and adults alike!

Weston on the Green Memorial Village Hall

Sunday 3rd December 2023, 6pm

Join us for the turning on of the Christmas Lights, mince pies, Christmas Raffle, carols around the tree, and festive cheer!



Enjoy a glass of wine, and mince pies as we turn on the Christmas lights and officially start the festive season in Weston!

Children will also receive a small gift from our special visitor, Father Christmas!

(Gifts from Father Christmas are for children of the village aged 11 and under.

To register your child for a gift please email westonvillagehall@live.co.uk with the name, age and address of your child)



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BeccaLou Designs

Individually hand-decorated Christmas cakes available at the end of November
4-inch square and 4-inch hemisphere - £18 | 6-inch round - £26 | 8-inch round - £35
2-inch round (gift size) - £7

Various traditional, cute and contemporary designs

A limited number of bespoke Christmas cake requirements can be catered for on request if ordered by 1st December
Other celebration cakes available. Allow at least 2 weeks prior to date required.

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John Howell MP writes...



JUST AS SCHOOLS were due to return, and the sunshine that many had been longing for came, we hit the problem of the safety of school buildings due to concerns over reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). The potential disruption to education and the timing of the problem caused inevitable and understandable frustration. The Department for Education had been working to identify buildings which may have RAAC over the last year and the advice had been to take RAAC areas out of use immediately if assessed by surveyors as 'critical'. Where they were assessed by surveyors as 'non-critical', the risk was not considered sufficient to require that these spaces be taken out of use. However, that position changed following cases that came to light over the summer and at the end of August the Department for Education advised all establishments with buildings with RAAC confirmed by a surveyor to take the affected space out of use until suitable mitigations have been put in place. I think that this was a sensible precautionary step to protect the safety of everyone whilst adequate mitigations are being put in place. Not to have done so would have created an unacceptable risk with potentially dire consequences. Whilst the concern was widespread thankfully once the list of affected places was published I was relieved to see that no schools in this constituency were affected.

Following the media coverage of the introduction of Ultra Low Emission Zones (ULEZ) I received a number of emails from constituents raising concerns on what is being seen by some as a war on motorists. I appreciate that a number of residents in this area do travel to London on a regular basis. Clean Air Zones focus on

vehicle emissions and have a specific target of trying to improve air quality in problem areas with specific focus on tackling NO2 there levels breach legal limits. The ULEZ in London means that for those who do not have a compatible vehicle there is now a charge of £12.50 a day to drive in these zones. As we have seen in the High Court challenge the size of the zone and the unavoidable negative economic impact on some residents makes the scheme contentious. The decision to introduce the scheme was entirely that of the Mayor of London, is funded through local taxation and not one over which Parliament has any say. The media reports of the Mayor of London seeking to hide research from Imperial College that questioned the beneficial environmental impact of the scheme simply led to the claims that it is nothing more than an anti-motorist cash cow. It is not difficult to see why motorists feel that 'war' is being declared on them.

From early days as an MP I have been very clear that in a rural area such as the Henley Constituency a car is not a luxury; it is an essential means of transport both locally and indeed for longer journeys where practical alternatives do not exist. Whilst we can argue for more public transport the geography and nature of people movement will always make it a

challenge to provide an efficient and economic system that meets the diverse travel needs. We need, as always, to find a balance and do our best to bring people with us on change. Sadly when measures are introduced that seem to be excessive it leads to other more genuine measures being challenged too. Tackling air pollution is nothing new. Since the middle of the 20th century regulatory frameworks have tried to address such issues and as we have learned more so this has been refined. The most recent Government Clean Air Strategy 2019 complements the Industrial Strategy, the Clean Growth strategy and the 25 Year Environment Plan. However the whole strategy is not just aimed at motorists, it is much wider.

I know that that online safety is a concern for many constituents, especially parents. The Online Safety Bill, which seeks to make the UK the safest place to go online has been some time in going through parliamentary process due to some concerns on over restriction. Some people called for it to be completely dropped. At the end of last year MPs agreed to recommit certain Clauses and Schedules of the Bill to further scrutiny. The Bill finally completed its stages in the House of Lords earlier this month and returned to the Commons with amendments. I am hoping that it will be passed by the time this newsletter is published as there is a need to better protect children online.

If there is a particular issue that concerns you, please do share your thoughts. If you would like to know more about my work on behalf of the Government, and in the Constituency, please do look at my website. The address is www.johnhowell.org.uk. My contact details are also on the website.

From your local councillors

Launton & Otmoor District Update

We are hoping you are enjoying this sunnier weather (or at least sunnier at time of writing) and have been able to spend some time relaxing over the summer. There are a few updates from us.

Local Plan Update

The updated Local Plan has now been published and it was approved to for public consultation. We expect that this will start in the middle of September and it will be a six-month consultation. We highly recommend that you read through the local plan and making your views known in the consultation as the plan will affect many of the decisions Cherwell will make in the future. You can find the updated local plan here:

<https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=3811&Ver=4>

Full Council 17th July 2023

The Full Council of Cherwell District Council took place on the 17th July. At this council six motions were passed unanimously confirming Cherwell's



commitment to the following:

- Draw up a cost of living action plan within the next 100 days
- Give careful consideration to keeping open the rail crossing at Sandy Lane in Yarnton
- Continue to fund resources into Cherwell's active lifestyle schemes
- Run a public awareness campaign to ensure tenants are aware of their rights
- Reaffirm the council's support for the NHS and to call on the government to do more to ensure that it is properly funded and maintained.
- Look at how Cherwell can encourage people not to litter across our villages and how it can support keeping areas tidy.

Parliamentary Boundary Changes

As many of you may have seen, the Boundary Commissions has published its final report. This means that all of the Launton and Otmoor ward will move into the new Bicester and Woodstock constituency seat at the next parliamentary election. You can find out more about the boundary review on the Boundary Commissions website.

Get in Touch

As always, please do get in touch! Our emails are gemma.coton@cherwell-dc.gov.uk and julian.nedelcu@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or phone us on 01869717712.

All the best, Gemma & Julian

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We are looking to recruit volunteers for our bereavement service to provide support to family and friends who have lost someone close to them.

Our service offers the opportunity for people who are bereaved to share their experience of grief and their memories of the person who has died.

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- *Warm, empathic and a good listener?*
- *Able to support other people's expression of grief and distress?*

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- *Have 16 hours a month to spare?*
- *Have your own transport?*
- *Want to make a difference?*

What we provide

- *Foundation level training given (approx 56hrs).*
- *Ongoing training, supervision, and support.*
- *Travel and phone expenses.*
- *Online mandatory training (approx 8 hours).*

We do not recommend this work for those who have experienced a significant bereavement in the last two years and it is essential that all training is attended.

CLOSING DATE: 1 November, 2023

If you are interested in finding out more or applying, please contact us on:

✉ pallcarevolunteerservices@ouh.nhs.uk

☎ 01865 225994 or

☎ 01865 225868

MedicAlert and Thames Valley Police: Introducing Safe and Found

There are currently 944,000 people living with dementia in the UK. On average, around 40,000 are reported missing every year.

The MedicAlert Foundation, in partnership with Thames Valley Police, have launched a dementia safeguarding programme, Safe and Found. This new initiative supports those living with dementia and other memory or cognitive conditions.

Safe and Found is available nationally and enables people living with dementia to securely store their Herbert Protocol form digitally. This document contains information that aids a missing person search, giving the police a better understanding of who they are looking for, what they have done previously and what they may be likely to do in the future. It includes places of importance, routines and habits, their connections, medical details and more.

The Herbert Protocol is a proven strategy in reducing search time and increasing the chance of the individual being found safe and well. MedicAlert is helping to speed up the process by providing quick access to this critical information in an emergency.

Chief Superintendent Mike Loebenberg from Thames Valley Police said: “When a family member or friend goes missing, it is an incredibly distressing time for those desperate to know where they are. This fear and distress is exacerbated when that individual is living with dementia.

“Completing and keeping an up to date Herbert Protocol form printed or saved and easily accessible is really important, but we know this can be challenging. MedicAlert is a service that can help, by storing information and working to keep it up to date and accessible for officers if it is needed.

“As a MedicAlert member myself, I know this partnership will provide loved ones with peace of mind that Thames Valley Police can access important information quickly and save time in the search for those missing. I hope this offers reassurance to those living with dementia and their families.”

The support of The McLay Dementia Trust makes the Safe and Found programme even more accessible.

MedicAlert and The McLay Dementia Trust will be providing the first year of MedicAlert membership free to anyone living with dementia in the UK.

“The MedicAlert charity is making dementia a priority. We are very proud to work with Thames Valley Police and The McLay Dementia Trust. These partnerships ensure you can feel safer and more comfortable to continue being active, socialising, and living well with dementia. Wherever you go, we will be with you.” says Mark Hacker, MedicAlert CEO.

“MedicAlert has also launched the Carer ID and storage of Emergency Care Plans to support carers. This ensures that, should a carer have an accident, their loved one receives appropriate and continuous care.”

To find out more about Safe and Found or how to apply for free membership through The McLay Dementia Trust grant, please visit the links below:

- medicalert.org.uk/mclay-dementia-trust
- medicalert.org.uk/safe-and-found/

Dates for the Diary

2nd October	9.00 am	Food Bank collection, Village Pantry
3rd October	12.30 pm	Golden Leaves Lunch
4th October	7.30 pm	Parish Council meeting
9th October	1.30 pm	Weston Walkers; meet at the Village Hall
12th October	10.00 am – 12.00 pm	Neighbours' Natter
18th October	7.30 pm	WI Meeting 'Survival of the Fittest'
28th October	6.15 pm	Bonfire Night, the Playing Field
1st November	7.30 pm	Parish Council meeting
7th November	12.30 pm	Golden Leaves Lunch
9th November	10.00 am – 12.00 pm	Neighbours' Natter
13th November	1.30 pm	Weston Walkers; meet at the Village Hall
13th November	7.30 pm	Weston Society
15th November	7.30 pm	WI Meeting 'Life and Work of Lord Nuffield'
3rd December	6.00 pm	Christmas Tree Lights Switch On
9th December	9.30 am	Big Breakfast at the Village Hall

Look out for the Garden Club posters giving details of their November AGM



**WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN
VILLAGE PANTRY & POST OFFICE**

FRIENDS PRODUCE

As ever a huge thank you to Mick, Corinne, Toddy and to those of you who have been donating fresh produce from your gardens and greenhouses. The total raised towards St Mary's Church and the Village Hall since the last edition is £132.74.



==== 50th Anniversary ====

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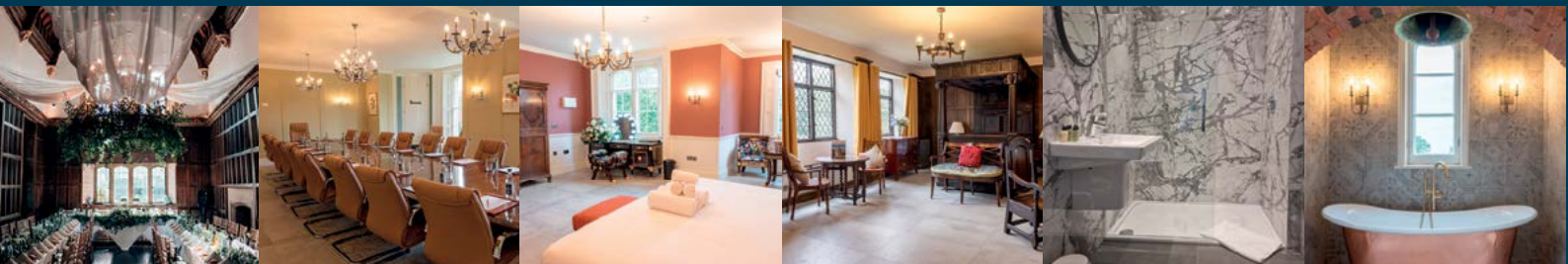


If you need an expert, qualified, honest guide for your property, call us on 01869 329530.

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